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How far may a Catholic
agree with socialists?

Dublin

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How Far May a Catholic Agree with Socialists ?

BY

Rev. J. E. CANAVAN, S.J.

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Anon

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How Far may a Catholic Agree with Socialists?

SEP 13 1946

In the upheaval caused by the late war, amid the conflict of ideas which the protracted struggle has produced, amid the passions and anxieties which have been aroused, one fact stands out boldly—the fact that Socialism, in some form or another, is moulding and will, for a time at least, continue to mould the political and economic consciousness of mankind. The Socialist ideal is not the ideal of many Socialists, as we know them; it is, indeed, older than Socialism; it has an ancient, and even an honourable, ancestry; but never before has that ideal swayed and captivated large masses of men. Socialism to-day is a vital force, a present demand. It is proposed as one solution of admitted evils which press heavily upon the workingman. Socialism answers, definitely or hazily, a *felt need*, and for this reason it cannot be ignored. It is not a mere philosophic dream, but a moving idea which is energising through the whole structure of society. It is the expression of a sense of grievance, all the more dangerous because vague, which smoulders among the workers. And just because Socialism is what it is, just because it has such actual contact with that life which we approve or deplore, just because it is making and not merely criticising history, you cannot refute it by logic. You may discredit a theory without removing the thing.

Socialism, moreover, protests that it is concerned with the interests of all men, that it is international. It makes the same appeal as the Catholic Church, for it claims that its principles and organisation overstep the boundaries of race and country, draw no dividing line between black and white, embrace all, Jew and Greek and Scythian without

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How Far may a Catholic Agree with Socialists?

SEP 13 1946 W.S.

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distinction of sex or age. What does the Church think of the principles by which this unity, this happy social peace and justice, is to be brought about? The Church set out to do what Socialists profess to have at heart. She seeks to restrain unlawful ambition, to check inordinate greed, to establish the reign of Justice among men by curbing selfishness, fostering charity and insisting on the intrinsic worth and dignity of man. Is her mission, therefore, challenged, is her supremacy contested? Are Socialism and the Catholic Church opposed all along the line? And if they are not diametrically opposed, in how far are they in conflict? What, in short, is the Church's opinion of Socialism?

When we ask "How far is Socialism condemned by the Church," we mean, "Does, and how far does, the Church authoritatively brand Socialism as contrary to faith and morals?" We say "authoritatively"; for to be condemned by some Churchmen is not the same thing as to be condemned by the Church, except when a doctrine is censured by the Bishop of a Diocese (in which case his strictures are binding on his subjects), or by one of the Roman Congregations empowered to do so. And the doctrinal judgments of the Holy See are, of course, authoritative, even when the Pope does not use his plenary power, but speaks, nevertheless, as head and ruler of the Church. His teaching then, though not infallible, will bind, in varying degrees, the conscience of the universal Church.

Further, if a view or opinion is opposed to the unanimous teaching of Catholic theologians, or of the Catholic Episcopate, it may fairly be said to be condemned by the Church. But, in this case, two things must be made clear: the unanimous agreement, on the one hand; and, on the other, the opposition of the doctrine to theological or Episcopal teaching.

Now, the judgment of the proper authority can be learned only from official documents and pronouncements. For these pronouncements, and for no other, the Church is responsible. And such judgments carry a weight of their own,—why? Because they are the findings of a competent authority to which we are bound to pay the deference of our obedience. Other teachings against Socialism are valid in so far as they can be supported by argument. Their

value does not go beyond the reasons advanced in support of them.

The official pronouncements of the Church in regard to Socialism are contained chiefly in the *Syllabus* of Pius IX. and the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. What is contained in them is the considered judgment of the Church in these matters, and may be quoted as such in any discussion of the social problem. What do they tell us?

In this essay we are not concerned with Socialism in any aspect except one. We are not considering it economically, except in so far as its economic theories are in conflict with the teaching of the Church. We are interested in its political theories only in so far as these theories run counter to the declared mind of the Church. We do not even intend to decide in how far Socialism trespasses on and violates, in concrete circumstances, just rights and vested interests lawfully acquired. We mean to treat the subject in the abstract, to confine ourselves to a critical analysis of the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. Briefly, we are seeking a clear answer to the general question—When may we say to a Socialist, "That opinion you express is condemned by the Church"?

The Socialists with whom Leo XIII. deals are, in his own words, a class of *Liberals* who either deny the law of God altogether, or if they admit the natural law, deny the existence of God's positive law known through revelation.¹ "Rationalism, materialism and atheism," writes the Pope in the *Exeunte iam Anno*, "have begotten socialism, communism and nihilism, fatal and pestilential evils, which naturally, and almost necessarily, flow forth from such principles." In so far, then, as Socialism is founded on atheism, materialism and rationalism, it is condemned by the Church, not merely on account of its principles, but also because of the results to which these principles lead.

Against Communism, which maintains that *everything* should be held in common, that private ownership is immoral, and that all property is robbery, the Church teaches that man has "by nature, the right to possess property as his own."² Property, according to the Church, may be lawfully acquired and lawfully held. The Scriptures recog-

¹ *Libertas Praestantissimum.*

² *Rerum Novarum.*

nise the right of ownership when they forbid theft. And Pope John XXII. in his constitution on the poverty of Christ, published in A.D. 1323, qualifies as *heretical* the opinion that Christ and, especially, the Apostles had not the right of using what they had, of selling their goods and of acquiring other things by such sale. The Scriptures, says the Pope, assert that Christ did so use goods, i.e., as their owner; and to say that He had not the ownership of them would be to maintain that He acted unjustly in treating them as if they were His own—"and that would be a shameful sentiment regarding the practice and usage of our Redeemer, the Son of God, a sentiment contrary to the Scriptures, and at complete variance with Catholic teaching."

The Gospels, then, recognise rights of ownership; and Leo XIII. points out in the *Lamentabili* that the law contained in the Gospel, and the law of nature, are not, and could not be, antagonistic. They are complementary, in the sense that private ownership is in accord with natural law. "Socialists," says the Pope, "wrongly assume the right of property to be of mere human invention, repugnant to the natural equality between men—that all may with impunity seize upon the possessions and usurp the rights of the wealthy." The rights of property, then, is not a mere human invention, and, being sanctioned by natural and positive law, is not opposed to natural equality among men.

If, then, a possessor has a right to property, there arises a corresponding duty on the part of others to respect that right, and a duty on the part of the State to protect it against private aggression. But what right has an individual to own property against the State itself? Could not the State confiscate private property if the need arose? And where must the line be drawn over which the State must not pass without becoming an unjust aggressor? It is admitted on all hands that the State may, for the sake of the common good, limit the extent of private ownership. "God has granted the earth to mankind in general," writes Leo XIII. in the *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, "not in the sense that all without distinction may do with it as they please, but rather that no part of it has been assigned to

any one in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry, AND BY THE LAWS OF INDIVIDUAL RACES." Consequently, a person may own goods by a twofold title—by virtue of his own labour, and by virtue of the law of his race. Can the State limit what he acquires by his own labour? Or has he an absolute right to everything he has earned?

It would be erroneous to assert, in the face of the clear teaching of Leo XIII.'s Encyclicals, that the State may deprive the family or the individual of the ownership of such property as is necessary for reasonable subsistence. And by ownership is here meant the right to a free use of possessions. The Communistic State is condemned, if by Communism is meant the system by which the State is the sole owner of everything, and the individuals have nothing more than the use of goods.

Some definite quotations from the Encyclicals on this subject will prove of value.

"The remedy they (the Communists) propose is manifestly against justice. For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own . . . It must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living beings do, but to have and to hold in stable possession; he must have not only things which perish in use, but those also which, though they may have been put to use, remain his own for further use." (*Rerum Novarum*.)

"Man precedes the State, and possesses, prior to the formation of any State, the right of providing for the sustenance of his body. Now to affirm that God has given the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race is not to deny that private property is lawful" (*Ibidem*.)

"Hence we have the family, the 'society' of a man's house—a society limited indeed in numbers, but no less a true 'society,' anterior to every kind of state or nation, invested with rights and duties of its own, totally independent of the civil community. The right of property, therefore, which has been proved to belong naturally to individuals, must likewise belong to man in his capacity of head of a family." (*Ibidem*.)

"Hence it is clear that the main tenet of Socialism, com-

munity of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonweal. The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property."³ (*Ibidem*).

"The State must not absorb the individual or the family; both should be allowed free and untrammelled action so far as is consistent with the common good and the interests of others." (*Ibidem*).

These citations reveal clearly the Pope's mind. He is arguing against extreme communism, and he states that men have a right to own property. "Private ownership is the natural right of man, and to exercise that right, especially as members of society, is not only lawful but absolutely necessary."

How much has a man an absolute right to own? The Pope does not say explicitly, but if his words mean anything, they mean that a man has an absolute right to the means of decent subsistence, especially if these means have been acquired by his own industry—for men work in order to live.

It will be helpful to regard this teaching from another point of view in order to emphasise the impartiality, soundness and integrity of Catholic doctrine.

The argument that a man's labour is *personal* is the main contention of the Encyclicals against the principles and practice of Individualism, against that set of capitalist opinions known as the Manchester School, which maintains that economics, and wages in particular, are governed by laws as rigid and unchangeable as the laws of nature. Into this domain of economic law morals do not penetrate: man must, willy-nilly, act in the future as he has acted in the past; and in the past, production and wages have been settled by free competition, by the exigencies of supply and demand. The Church, on the contrary, maintains, against both the Communist and the opponent of the Communist,

³ Private property as an institution, i.e. *ownership* must be allowed of such property as is necessary for the sustenance of a man and his family.

that every man, because he is a person, has certain inalienable rights founded in his actual nature. And the most fundamental right is the right to live as a rational being. Positive law, economic necessity, the pressure of competition, and the rest, can but reinforce this right; they cannot abrogate it.

The Church, then, teaches that each man has a right to some property, a right which he must be permitted to exercise, and this not because communism is essentially immoral, but because, in an imperfect state of human affairs, communism would lead to enormous evils—except in religious communities or in such simple conditions as prevailed, for instance, in Paraguay.

Consequently, if men have private interests, if they possess inalienable personal rights, it follows that they may lawfully take such precautions as will develop, confirm and protect these rights. They may, therefore, form themselves into corporations, into Trades Unions, for example, in order to enforce their just claim. The State may not without sufficient, and even urgent, reason declare such unions illegal, or violently suppress them. These associations exist, as Leo XIII. asserts in the *Rerum Novarum*, "of their own right." "These lesser societies, and the society which constitutes the State, differ in many respects, because their immediate purpose and aim is different. Civil society exists for the common good, and hence is concerned with the interests of all in general, albeit with individual interests also in their due place and degree. It is, therefore, called *public* society, because by its agency, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, 'Men establish relations in common with one another in the setting up of a commonwealth.' But societies which are formed in the bosom of the State are called *private*, and rightly so, since their immediate purpose is the private advantage of the associates. Private societies, therefore, though they exist within the State, and are severally part of the State, cannot nevertheless be absolutely, and as such, prohibited by the State. For to enter into a 'society' of this kind is the natural right of man; and the State is bound to protect natural rights, not to destroy them; and if it forbids its citizens to form associations, it contradicts the very principle of its own exist-

ence, for both they and it exist in virtue of the same principle, the natural tendency of man to dwell in society."

Granted, then, that a man has an indetermined right based on natural law to the means necessary for decent subsistence, where and how does he acquire the right to own anything in particular, or to own more than what is necessary—to own what we may, for the purposes of this discussion, call *superfluous* goods? And, narrowing the question to a concrete case, we may ask: Is it contrary to the Church's teaching to advocate the State ownership of all the means of production and distribution?⁴ If we seek an answer to this question in Leo XIII.'s Encyclicals we shall find none. No passage in the Encyclicals lays it down clearly and definitely that, in expropriating the present owners, the State would necessarily act unjustly. It is nowhere taught that a man should possess in perpetuity what he happens here and now to own, unless he surrenders his right by free act, or forfeits it by misdemeanor. The Pope sets up no barrier against State interference, except the barrier of absolute right to the means of subsistence. He has not defined the rights of individuals against the State more minutely than this.

The Pope nowhere contemplates a Socialist State in being. He conceives of the Socialists as an unauthorised society, as a revolutionary band of atheists, materialists and communists, warring against lawfully constituted authority, against established private rights. The State's duty is, in these circumstances, to protect private property against unauthorised attacks. The principle of private property must be kept intact against private aggression: the State, in short, must punish and restrain thieves and robbers. But what if the Civil Authority, the State itself, judges it necessary for the common good to take over private property in the means of production and distribution, and in *superfluous* goods? and, if the case permits, as it almost always must permit, to do so on an equitable basis of compensation? This would not be communism, in the sense condemned by the Pope—it would allow inequality

⁴ I am assuming that the *means* of production and distribution are "*superfluous*" goods, provided that each person has the ownership of some part of the products.

of condition; it would allow ownership, it would not insist on everything being held in common. Each particular person would not have a right to everything; but individuals would *own* what, in the main, individuals own now, and the State would own what is now the property of capitalists. The State would be the greatest capitalist in the country; but if it limited itself to appropriating or purchasing just the means of production and distribution, it would not be the only owner. The crime of theft would not be abolished under such an arrangement. And such Socialism is nowhere condemned by the Church. That the State may own all the means of production and distribution is, in the abstract, and on Catholic principles, a perfectly sound doctrine.

But may the State confiscate, without compensation, if the need is urgent and compensation impossible?

Man, says the Pope, has a right to provide for the sustenance of his body, whether he be a citizen or a savage. The State, consequently, must recognise this right, and must, therefore, recognise some division of goods. But the right to possess *superfluous* goods—is the State compelled to recognise and protect this right with the same force as it is compelled to allow the more fundamental right?

Though the Pope refers to "rights of private property," he nowhere defines exactly what he means by the phrase. What gives a right to property? On what is the title based? A landlord owns 20,000 acres; he has a valid title; he is the lawful owner: why is he the lawful owner, and why is his title valid? The question is disputed among Catholic theologians, and the Church has not decided between the disputants. Consequently, the authority of the Church may not be quoted for any particular opinion, and a Catholic may safely hold that one which he judges most probable or most true.

Many theologians draw a sharp distinction between the Law of Nature (the *Jus Naturæ*) and the Law of the Peoples (*Jus Gentium*). Whether St. Thomas does so adequately or not is a matter of controversy; but it is more than probable that he does.

Billuart, one of the greatest Dominican theologians,

says, in his treatise "De Justitia et Jure": "A law of nature is either a first principle known *per se*, or a conclusion drawn from it by absolute necessity, independent of all human choice: but the Law of Peoples is not a first principle, nor a necessary deduction from one, but merely an arrangement useful and fitting in human society, in adopting which all, or nearly all, nations are at one."⁵ Suarez, Lessius, Sylvius, Molina, Valencia, Vasquez, the Salmanticensis, Viva, Crolly, and others concur in this opinion. Toletus⁶ defines the Law of the Peoples as "that law which the human will has established among all peoples for the attainment of a necessary object." What is the necessary object? The peace, security and progress of society. This law, it must be noted, is not formulated in a definite statute, but it is rather of the nature of a universal custom. Human reason perceived that a thing was necessary for the security and well-being of society; and the human will accepted and put into execution the dictate of reason. The Natural Law (*Jus Naturae*) imposes an obligation absolutely; the Law of Peoples (*Jus Gentium*) establishes what nature shows us to be necessary in prevalent conditions, for the attainment of the object which society has in view. The *Jus Gentium* is not imposed on peoples with the ineluctable necessity of natural law; it is an outcome of the common will under the guidance of reason.

Apply this to the ownership of land:—The earth was given to man in common: that is, no portion of it was earmarked for a particular person, no person was given a claim to a particular portion of it, by natural law. And, further, each individual had a natural right to some portion of the earth's riches, to some products of land and sea. But to what portion? It is easy to see that it was better to come to some arrangement, whereby land should be divided; for communism is a cumbrous and quarrelsome system. By nature, prior to the formation of any state, each man had a right to own the necessary means for a decent subsistence. But in order to secure him in this right, the State, on its establishment, saw that a division of land (which is the chief source of all wealth) was

⁵ D I, art. 3.

⁶ "De Jure," art. 3.

necessary. Thus, the civil authority having in view a necessary social end, decided that a division of land should be allowed. The natural law did not positively enjoin such action on the State. The natural law required that each person should own at least what was essential for human subsistence; the natural law required that the State should take measures for the common good: and the State saw that, as a rule, these two objects could only be attained if there were a stable and permanent division. That is, the State tolerated and protected the private ownership of *particular* things, like land, in order to safeguard both the common good and the fundamental *indetermined* right of individuals to the means of subsistence. If it had been better for the common good to forbid appropriation of land by individuals, it would have been the State's duty not merely to tolerate but to insist on common ownership. The natural law neither forbids nor enforces private ownership of particular things, neither forbids nor enforces common ownership. The title to ownership of many particular things comes from the State directly, not from nature, even though the State be bound, in order to carry out the natural law, to grant such a title. Each man has a right to *something*; if each could reduce this right to practice without let or hindrance in a communistic system, then communism would not be wrong, though it might be clumsy and unprogressive. But then, this would not be the communism which the Pope condemns, for each man would be an owner, not necessarily of the means of production, but of some part of the products, which he had made his own by labour.

Leo XIII. all through his Encyclicals treats of natural rights founded necessarily on the natural law; and not of rights which are derived conditionally from it. He deals with the ownership of such things as are "required for the preservation of life." When he says that "the rights of private property must be kept inviolate," he is dealing not with rights which are merely in accordance with the natural law (for instance, the right to possess superfluous goods) but with rights which are necessarily deduced from the natural law, or are integral parts of it. And this interpre-

tation of the Encyclicals is in full accord with a firm tradition in Catholic theology.

Many theologians teach:—1° Division and appropriation of goods was necessary after the fall of Adam. 2° This division was founded on positive human law—the Jus Gentium. 3° The titles of appropriation were then fixed by statutes. 4° In acting thus, man acted in accordance with nature.

Scotus and others⁷ held that before the Fall private property was forbidden. If this is so, communism, rightly understood, is not contrary to the natural law, for by Adam's sin human nature is not essentially changed. The conditions under which it operates are different.

Supposing, then, a Socialist did not deny that authority comes from God, did not claim absolute supremacy for the State, was prepared to admit that the Church, the family and the individual possessed inalienable rights, which the civil government was bound to respect and safeguard—how far could he interfere with the economic freedom of the individual without running counter to the teaching of the Church? Could he licitly maintain that, given the necessary conditions, the State should own all the means of production and distribution? Again we remind our readers that we are discussing doctrine in the abstract, and not its concrete application. A theory may be sound as a theory, and be, at the same time, so inexpedient in practice, as to be immoral. The fact that the Church has not condemned a theory is no reason why we should straightway put the theory into operation. Circumstances may be so adverse as to render any such attempt highly reprehensible.

If the Jus Gentium, or Law of the Peoples, is positive human law, it may, unlike the natural law, be repealed by the human will which enacted it. Molina contends that the obligation to make a permanent division of goods, to concede stable private ownership, would arise only when grave evils would result if this were not done. Social needs establish the lawfulness or unlawfulness of stable division; and foremost among social needs is the natural right of ownership. The primary object of the Jus Gentium is to secure for each one the means necessary for decent sub-

⁷ Wigger's "Commentary on St. Thomas."

sistence; and except in very rare cases (for instance, in religious congregations) the Jus Gentium could not usefully, nor therefore lawfully, be repealed. The State is bound, by the natural law, to watch over and promote the interests both of the individual and of the community; and the interests of neither could be protected or furthered, in present circumstances, by the abolition of the Jus Gentium, in its bearing on private ownership.

The State, however, by nationalising the means of production and distribution, would not thereby abrogate the whole Jus Gentium; for it would not abolish all division or confiscate everything that is now privately owned. It would abolish particular titles to particular things; and if this were clearly necessary for the common good, the State could assume ownership while making compensation, or, if compensation were impossible, then without any.

The opinion set forth above is contested by many modern theologians, and by one of great name—Cardinal de Lugo. Catholic theologians are not unanimous in the support of one view, to the exclusion of all others. A Catholic may not, in accordance with the theory developed in this essay, affirm that all private ownership may be abolished, but he may affirm that, considered in the abstract, private ownership of superfluous goods may be abrogated; because he is at liberty to maintain, as a Catholic, that all titles to definite ownership of superfluous goods come from the State. Why is he at liberty, as a Catholic, to maintain this? Because it is the teaching of many, though not of all, approved theologians, and because the Church has not decided a question which has been, and is, debated among Catholic thinkers. Whence does my title to these acres spring? On what is it founded? This is still a *Disputed Question*, and the Church has not interfered in the controversy.

I am treating the subject historically: I do not defend either the opinion here elaborated, nor the opinion of De Lugo. I simply state that there are two opinions current in the Church, one affirming, the other denying the State's competency to abrogate permanently the private ownership of superfluous goods, but I do not examine the merits of either. Neither has the Church done so: she tolerates

both. If you were to support the opinion described at some length above, you might advocate, as a philosophical proposition, the lawfulness of State ownership of the means of production and distribution, and of superfluous goods; and in doing so you would not be at variance with the Encyclicals of Leo XIII., or any other Church teaching.

Consequently, though the State may now, because of the imperfection of human nature, be bound to recognise the *Jus Gentium*, be bound to make some division of property, the State is not obliged, by the natural law, to recognise the present division of property, nor the current titles to it. These titles come, for the most part, from the State; they may, therefore, be abolished by the State. The authority which gives, may, for sufficient reasons, take away. The State may, if the need arises, appropriate all the means of production and distribution, without thereby incurring any ecclesiastical censure.

If the concrete circumstances of a people demanded that private property in superfluous goods should be abolished for the common good, it could be done justly; if concrete circumstances did not make the abolition highly useful, it would be unjust to interfere with rights which had been justly acquired. But the Pope, in his Encyclicals, has offered no judgment on concrete circumstances. You might prove up to the hilt that suppression of private property here and now in Ireland would be unjust and immoral, because unnecessary and inexpedient. Your conclusion might be irrefutable, but all the same you could not quote the Church or make her responsible for it. She has formed no judgment on Irish circumstances. All the Church says is, If interference with private ownership is unnecessary, if calculated to lead to greater disorders, if not certainly more conducive to the general well-being, then the State must allow acquired rights to stand. The Church speaks conditionally. If you remove the condition, as you do, in the special case under consideration, you have not the Church's authority, though you may be fully justified on other grounds in doing so. The rights of private ownership are really rooted, according to many leading theologians, in a concession made by the State; and the rights were conceded because of the

evils which communism entails. The certainty of these evils arising out of communism is the sole measure of the State's obligation to legalise private ownership and maintain its existence. The questions to be discussed and decided on each occasion, are: Do the advantages of private ownership outweigh its disadvantages? Can they be obtained by other means or not at all? Is State ownership really necessary? Would it be certainly beneficial? Would it certainly remove the main disorders of the present social system? And, obviously, in answering these special questions, on which the morality of your subsequent action depends, you cannot appeal to the authority of the Church. The argument from authority fails you here, and you must decide the case, as best you may, on its own merits. The full argument against expropriation in Ireland might run thus:—The Church teaches that, if unnecessary, it is unjust to dispossess rightful owners. But for many and grave reasons it is clearly unnecessary in the case of Ireland. Therefore, the Church teaches that, in the case of Ireland, it is unjust! No! the statement "it is unnecessary in the case of Ireland" is your own, and the Church has had no part in the framing of it. You may be fully justified in your assertion, but the Church has not adopted it. You may not, therefore, make her responsible for the conclusion you have arrived at. Your conclusion should be: Therefore, if my view be correct that expropriation of private owners is unnecessary in Ireland, it is on Catholic principles unjust.

Consequently:—Socialism has many forms. A certain Socialism is condemned by the Church. It does not follow that all forms are condemned. A Socialism which recognises private property is not necessarily contrary to the Church's teaching. Already the State owns posts and telegraphs, and, in some countries, the railways. The morality or immorality of putting into operation, on a large scale, such a form of Socialism, depends altogether on existing conditions. It is a question of expediency. Will it work? And to the advantage of the people—of the State? Private ownership there must be. Under no circumstances may the State abrogate the *Jus Gentium* in its entirety. How much of it may be lawfully abrogated, I do

not seek to determine; but it is clear that, if circumstances require it, the State may justly assume the ownership of the means of production and distribution.

We Catholics have to guard, in this question of Socialism, against a twofold danger:—The one, allowing ourselves to be carried away by certain extreme Socialistic theories, which meet with considerable acceptance in the present: the other, refusing to recognise what is true, or at least admissible on Catholic principles, in various forms of Socialism. We may be prejudiced, on the one hand, by the evils which frequently arise from private ownership and capitalism; and, on the other, by the fact that Socialists show themselves so generally the enemies of revealed religion, and particularly of Catholicism. In these pages, I have endeavoured to avoid both dangers; and to follow after truth, under the guidance of Leo XIII.

Rihil Obstat:

P. FINLAY S.J.

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